



The Thief-Taker's Apprentice

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Berren has lived in the city all his life. He has made his way as a thief, paying a little of what he earns to the master of their band, Hatchet. But there is a twist to this thief's tale.

One day Berren goes to watch an execution of three thieves. He watches as the thief-taker takes his reward and decides to try and steal the prize. He fails. The young thief is taken. But the thief-taker spots something in Berren. And the boy reminds him of someone as well. Berren, not that he has much choice, becomes his apprentice.

And is introduced to a world of shadows, deceit, and corruption behind the streets he thought he knew. A city where he must learn to take not purses, but lives...

Full of richly observed life in a teeming fantasy city, a hectic progression of fights, flights and fancies and charting the fall of a boy into the dark world of political plotting and murder, this marks the beginning of a new series for all lovers of fantasy.

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice Details

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Author : Stephen Deas

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From Reader Review The Thief-Taker's Apprentice for online ebook

Trevor Gannalo says

In English author Stephen Deas's thrilling fantasy novel *Thief Taker's Apprentice* (2010) he exemplifies that good can come out of giving someone a second chance through plot and character development. *Thief Taker's Apprentice* is based in a fictional medieval world, specifically Deephaven. *Thief Taker's Apprentice* is about the apprentice of the thief taker, Master Sy. A thief taker is a bounty hunter paid by the city of Deephaven to capture thieves. I believe it is very well written, and I enjoyed reading the remaining books in the series as well.

Thief Taker's Apprentice is about a young boy named Berren. He is a skilled thief that is about 15 years old. He lives in a house with several other boys, who all serve Master Hatchet, a criminal who runs a ring of child thieves and who also cleans the city. The book begins with an interesting attention getter; an execution. During the execution, the executioner gives Master Sy a bag of ten gold emperors, which is a fortune to poor Berren. Berren tries to steal the bag, and succeeds, however inside the bag is only a few pennies. Master Sy, who has never had anything stolen from him, follows him and recruits him as his apprentice.

The book revolves around pirates, who are sneaking into the bay, raiding ships, and escaping without detection. Master Sy and Berren are tasked with finding the pirates and stopping them. "Well, if you won't then I will. Once upon a time the folk from fishing villages a little further up the coast used to row down at night whenever the moon was full" (Deas 818). The person who is saying this is Justicar Kol, the person who pays all the thief takers. He believes that the Mudlarks, who are fishermen that live in a swampy area near the city, are responsible. He is correct; the Mudlarks are sailing around Wrecking Point and climbing up the boats.

"I'm very sorry Berren, but I've misjudged our friend the harbor-master, and badly so" (Deas 2502). After the thief taker determines that it is the Mudlarks who are stealing from ships, he needs to find out how they know which ships to attack and how they are getting out so easily and quickly. Master Sy brings Berren and Lilissa, a supporting character, to a very wealthy tavern to meet the harbor-master. He believes he can find out which one of the harbor-master's underlings is corrupt. However, he gets a deadly surprise when he learns that the harbor-master is the corrupt one when he sends snuffers after them. Snuffers are mercenary guards. The snuffers nearly kill Master Sy, but he manages to escape and a friend saves him. In the end, they don't end up turning the harbor-master in for a few reasons. First, they were hired to stop pirates, not corrupt government officials. Second, even if they took justice into their own hands, they wouldn't get paid. Third, they had his name saved for the next time something bad happened.

I really enjoyed how well-constructed the background history was, as well as the setting. It gave a good view of the spectrum of life in that environment, from dirt poor to incredibly rich. The theme is expressed throughout the novel because Berren was once a thief, but by the end, he is turning in pirates and stopping corrupt politicians. I found this book incredibly enjoyable, and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys fantasy/medieval books.

Adam Whitehead says

The city of Deephaven is still recovering from a civil war that wracked it and the surrounding Empire several

decades ago. The war left behind many orphans and unwanted children, some of whom have grown up with thievery the only option for survival. After unwisely making a thief-taker his mark, one of these boys, Berren finds his life transformed as he is recruited as the thief-taker's apprentice.

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is the start of a new trilogy by Stephen Deas, author of the Memory of Flames Trilogy (The Adamantine Palace, The King of the Crags and the forthcoming The Order of Scales). It is set in the same world, apparently on a continent on the far side of the Taiytakei homelands, but a couple of mentions of the Taiytakei aside, there are no links between the two series (yet, anyway). It is also nominally a 'Young Adult' title, but Deas actually pulls few punches in the book to accommodate these younger readers. Particularly amusing (and actually effective) is the use of corrupted Cockney rhyming slang to get around restrictions on swearing, whilst the violence is not particularly sanitised (although not gratuitous, either).

The book is pretty traditional. Whilst Memory of Flames has the politics of the dragon realms and the use of dragons as horrendous weapons of war going for it, The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is much happier employing standard tropes. We have a young main character (albeit one whose morality is a bit greyer than the standard young boy cliché), an older mentor (a disgraced nobleman from a distant land), the romantic interest, the nemesis and so on. Those looking for something surprising and new might be disappointed here. However, Deas takes the standard material and infuses it with great pace and some impressive depth, given the modest page count. The city of Deephaven, with its myriad districts, street gangs, commercial interests, sense of traumatic history and politics (seen here only at a far remove), is depicted very well, whilst there's some good character moments, particularly with Syannis the conflicted thief-taker and some minor characters like Kasmin. Berren himself and romantic interest Lilissa are less surprising, but likable enough as antagonists.

Where the book falters is that it hints at some more interesting developments to come, but then ends just as the story gets going. Given the book's slight length, it feels like it could have been longer and pursued certain storylines further.

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice (***) is a likable, enjoyable story but one that whets the appetite rather than fully satisfies. The sequel, The Warlock's Shadow, is due next year. The book is available now in the UK and on import in the USA.

Yvet says

Enjoyable, but slightly shallow story.

I feel like it is either not finished and this should be part 1 of book 1 or something.

I would recommend the book to anyone who is feeling like a nice, semi-positive story. As long as you can get the book for free!

It is not astonishingly great in my opinion and it is a "little book", a short story. I borrowed it from my local library and am happy I have read it. Gave me a good few hours of enjoyment. But I would be slightly disappointed if I had paid a full-book-price for it.

Katnip says

Look. I know I gave it two stars. I know.
But I think this damn thing has potential! Reminds me of an extended version of the early part (Kylar's childhood) in (SORT OF, please don't rain your fury down on me) of **Way of The Shadows by Brent Weeks**. Emphasis on the early part though.

It does get a *bit* boring. I definitely wanted Berren to be more kickass, I wanted Syannis to be more... restrained? Masterly? Flawless? I dunno, better I suppose. The nicknames (for eg. Master Sy) did get on my nerves. Fore mostly because he's supposed to be a feared man yet he's got one of the stupidest nicknames I've ever heard.

Anyway. Plot, slow. Characters, at times annoying and at times under developed. Not a mature novel thats for sure. **BUT IT HAS POTENTIAL!** Maybe, hopefully, the novels will grow with Berren. They better, or I'll be eating my damn words. I think its a trilogy? Though I kind of expect that about every book so don't hold me to it. I do suggest reading it, though maybe wait till you can read the next ones, because I think that this is just sort of like a taste, a tease. I wouldn't base my expectations solely on this one example, I sincerely hope it turns into a great? maybe good series.

One last thing. The cover. What the hells with that? **THEY ARE CLEARLY BOTH HOLDING SWORDS.**

AT WHAT POINT IN THE BOOK, I ADDRESS YOU STEPHEN DEAS, DOES BERREN HAVE A SWORD.

And the answer is never. He is not even trained in this book. So uh, next time, how about YOU choose the cover art and actually, I don't know, maybe make it pertain to a certain event in YOUR book. You know, the one its on the cover of.

Crazy idea, I know, I know.

Thoraiya says

A decent read with a Cup-A-Soup in bed on a sick day! (part 3)

EDIT: I've looked at the other reviews, now, and gone, "YA?? THAT MAKES SENSE!" Because even though it was a teensy bit formulaic, it was fun, and if I could send it back to my YA self, who only wanted to read different versions of "Magician" and "Sorcerer's Apprentice" for about 5 years straight, I totally would, and she would be gushingly grateful.

Lance says

"Something very important and very precious. Something I couldn't really do without. As a consequence I'm not so fond of thieves. I'm also very good at catching them. I've made it my business. Would it surprise you to know that you're the only person who's ever stolen from me since?"

Berren is a Dickensian street urchin living in a pre-renaissance city that smells of fish. He picks a pocket or two, a callow and malleable boy waiting to grow a personality, before an attempt to steal 10 gold coins from a thief-catcher gives him an unexpected chance in life. The mysterious thief taker Syannis is reminded of someone by Berren *"He was looking at Berren hard, though, wearing his sad face, as though he'd dreamed of something bad that had yet to come."*, and takes him on as an apprentice.

"That's your first lesson, boy. Money, magic and power. They're always behind everything."

Hence follows a sedate tale of Berren's attempt to muddle through bettering himself with as little personal change as possible and as much action. He follows his master without permission into the dens of pirates financed by the city's harbour-master. *"Money is the blood of this city. The rest of it, the flesh and bones where everyone else lives: that sprawls inland, that's the stuff you know. But here is its heart. Ships and money, lad."* This takes him to a shanty-town over a swamp in Stiltside and the fantastically grim bridge city over the collapsed and reeking canals in Talsin's Forest where he watches his master slash his way through rogues. *"the thief-taker who danced through knives and laughed at swords and always knew the answer."* The pirate ring doesn't quite come to a satisfying conclusion, but it is great character building.

"A thief lacks the courage that makes honest men strong. The other thing that a thief lacks is wit, for a man with a sharp wit has no need to be a thief."

The characters are deliciously archetypal. Syannis the thief-taker is a worlwind of stylish swordsmanship and wit *"Where I come from, people often have lots of names. We acquire them the way you Arians acquire gold. They just fall out of the air and land on us."*, with a dark past that seems to encompass a lot more than some stinky fishing boats: *"They stole my family from me, Berren. They stole my family and my kingdom."*. He is grim, brooding, and admirable, a vigilante Batman for this 1500s medieval city. *"The rest aren't much different from the thieves they take, but Master Syannis, it makes no difference to him whether his thieves are street urchins or princes, whether they steal a loaf of bread or a kingdom."* Berren, on the other hand, is an interesting take on the orphan hero. A simple, at many times transparent youth curiously lacking in compassion *"Here I am, trying to tell you about the people who are the poorest in our little world so you might pity them and help them, and all you care for is who are the richest and the most powerful so that you can envy and resent them."* He has a simmering undercurrent of recklessness, like the sea in calm, which he passes off as stupidity to hide its blind ambition and rage. *"The ringmail shirt, on the other hand, looked like the sort of thing that let you stagger and crawl away when without it you'd be dead. Except for the hole where someone obviously hadn't done anything much but lie where they were and die anyway. It didn't look very heroic."* I am interested to see how he becomes the monster depicted in the preview of *The Dragon Queen*. Even the city has its own lurid period personality. *"Deephaven did that. It reached out along its waterways like a greedy prince stretching out to grasp at everything."* I hope to see some more comprehensive history in the following books. *"The city nearly died in the siege. I was here and it was hell. We ate the dead, boy. And when we didn't have any of them left, we started on the sick. You don't see it on the surface now, but underneath it's there."*

All the way through, the book was heading for a very solid three-star rating. Until the mudlarks, impoverished swamp-dwellers who have nothing but their lives and their freedom started talking in hackneyed cockney rhyming-slang. I'm sorry, but it was incredibly distracting, and I couldn't empathise with the characters properly or feel the uniqueness of their setting in their behaviour because their language was so stereotyped. Really annoying. And right in the middle of all the action scenes as well. Next time, Deas, give your characters individual voice by manipulating their vocabulary, not by sending them on exchange to *EastEnders*.

Nicole Gozdek says

Die Geschichte fing ganz gut an, doch ab der 2. Hälfte brachte das Buch immer weniger Spaß. Die Distanz zwischen mir und den Ereignissen im Roman wuchs, leider hat es Stephen Deas nicht mehr geschafft, mich als Leserin mitzunehmen in die Welt des Thief-Takers, der Gangs in der Stadt und der Informanten. Am Ende hatte ich zu oft keine Ahnung, warum bestimmte Dinge geschehen mussten, geschweige denn dass sie mich berühren konnten. Schade, aber leider hat mir das Buch insgesamt nicht gefallen.

Liviu says

Set in the same universe as the author's Dragon novels but in a land far away and connected with the previous books only by the mysterious traders appearing in both, this novel is a series beginning which ostensibly features a young orphan and his mentor an exiled prince moonlighting as an "official" private eye or "unofficial" cop - thief-taker - in the local jargon. But there are hints of much more, so who knows where the series will go.

Almost to the end i enjoyed this novel as much as the author's debut Adamantine palace which was a top fantasy of mine last year - the sequel King of the Crag was good, but lacked the freshness and audacity of the debut and suffered a bit from the middle book syndrome as well as harking a bit towards the conventional with more back story and detail about this or that.

The writing is both energetic and tense and the world building is exquisite; the plot is minimal beyond the coming of age story and there is more talk on occasion than action, but i did not mind that since the rest is so good - the novel loses a bit off steam towards the end, where it essentially passes time to a "to be continued" sign, so overall it reads as a big introduction - an excellent one, but still just a prologue - and the series should really get going in the next volume

A strong A and clear potential for a great series if the foreshadowing and hints of much deeper stuff materialize in further installments

Shaitarn . says

Young Berren is one of a band of urchin thieves; he tries to steal a thief-taker's reward and is caught. He reminds the thief-taker of someone, so he decides to take him as an apprentice. Berren soon finds that the life of a thief-taker is far more darker and dangerous than the dealings of a mere cut-purse.

I'm going to give this 3 and a bit stars. 3.25 perhaps? Not a bad read, but not a really good one either. It had a lot of potential, but was frustrating flat for much of the time. There was action, but it took soooo long to get there! The characters are also a little flat – Berren is far more hopeless than I was expecting/hoping – this is one book where the apprentice is very much the apprentice, not a gifted natural. Master Syannis, the thief-taker, is a more interesting character, though I frequently found him annoying and unlikeable.

But even with all that, this has whetted my appetite to the point that I might actually get the sequels just to see what happens to the characters in the future.

Mieneke says

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is Stephen Deas' first YA novel. It's set in the same world as his *A Memory of Flames* trilogy and is the first in a trilogy of its own. The book, as mentioned, is YA, but Master Syannis, the titular thief-taker, offers adults a great connection and a way into the novel. The story never gets boring or too telegraphed and while the writing and length of the chapters are bite-size, Deas doesn't talk down to his younger readers.

I really liked the protagonist Berren. I like the combination of Berren's cunning and innocence. On the one hand he's a tough-as-nails street kid, looking after himself, on the other hand, he really is a kid, with a kid's way of looking at the world. For example, the unblinking fascination he and his fellow street rats show as they watch the beheadings at the start of the book is typically child-like. Another example is his naming of his little cut-purse knife Stealer, which is so very endearing. Berren grows during the book, where at first he is fascinated and excited by the beheadings and later the deadly fight he witnesses between Syannis and some thugs, by the end of the book, fighting and killing isn't so glorious any more; Berren grown up and realises the finality of such an act.

In the same vein, Syannis is a great character, though he doesn't show as much growth as Berren, in fact he largely remains a mystery. His gruff care for Berren seems driven by the latter's mysterious heritage. We find out more about Syannis' background in dribs and drabs, but the details of the story remain hidden. But despite all the mystery, or maybe because of it, I found Syannis the more compelling character in the book. While I loved Berren's story, Syannis intrigued me and I hope we'll learn more about him in the following books. In addition, I liked the bond that developed between boy and man. At the start, Berren is forced to stay with Syannis and Syannis only seems to take him on, because of Berren's resemblance to someone in Syannis' past. But, by the end of the story the bond seems genuine and they really seem to care for one another.

While Deas doesn't reinvent the thief's tale with *The Thief-Taker's Apprentice*, he brings a new twist to it with the concept of the thief-taker and it's an enjoyable one. In addition, it means he gets to roam the streets of Deephaven and show us all the corners and curiosities of the city. Deephaven is well-developed with its history well-documented in its buildings and its traditions. While we don't travel far from the city, beyond the excursion down the river, the reader also gets a sense that the world beyond the city is as well-built, we just don't need to see it in the course of this narrative. Hopefully we'll be allowed to visit it in further instalments in the trilogy.

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is a story that can be read as a standalone and be satisfying in and of itself. But there remain questions on a larger scale that have yet to be answered, which promises a lot for the next book, *The Warlock's Shadow*, which is out in July from Gollancz. I really enjoyed *The Thief-Taker's Apprentice* and I'm planning to search out Deas' other books as well, as I'm wanting to read more of his work now!

Sarah Castillo says

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is a dark novel starring an ex-thief in a medieval style world that is frighteningly realistic. I'm going to say up front that if you aren't alright with the realities of public executions, bloody sword fights and back alley beatings, this isn't the book for you. If that sound's like it's up your alley, carry on.

In some ways, this book goes with a lot of the ordinary tropes; there's an orphan boy that's more than what he seems; the dour assassin(thief-taker in this case).But.. that's ok. Because I like those tropes.

Some people might find the fact that the main character spends most of the book learning the ropes and not being awesome, but I think that this made the book more interesting because we get to see, uhm, apprenticeship happening. In a lot of books you're an apprentice and then magic awesome comes out of you. In this book Berren's being an apprentice means we get to understand his impressions of this training, trade and new Master.

One problem though... this is a young-adult book? Really? I mean, no one puts any of their parts into the

parts of anyone else, so I guess that's good but... I don't know. It seems pretty gory for a young adult book.

It's good, read it. It's the first in a series that's set in the same world as some of Stephen Deas' other books.

Check out my other reviews at my blog

Talon Williams says

Great Book! Can't wait to read more

Nicky says

This was a brilliant read within a few chapters i was wandering the streest of Deephaven, seeing the sight and smells of the place. The story was discriptive and engaging, the charaters are skillfully brought to life. the book isn't due for publishing until September/October but I am already eagerly awaiting the next enstallment

Blodeuedd Finland says

My thoughts:

I don't know if I would have know this was YA if I hadn't read it somewhere, and because of that it works just as well for a young reader as for an adult reader.

The main character is a thief named Berren, he is somewhere between 12 and 15, an orphan and a tough young boy that has seen the city at its worst. I did like him, one have to, he steals to survive and he is smart enough to realize (after a while) that being an apprentice to a thief-taker could get him out of his old life. But he is also smart enough to see that his new life is pretty messed up too, he will surely have to kill someday. His new master Sy, is an enigma and I like those. Slowly we learn more about him and why he does the things he do. There are a few others we meet too but in this book the young Lissiana stands out the most. Young heroes always have crushes.

The book was bloody too, perhaps that is what made it better for me. That might sound wrong, but life was harsh and I like it to show in fantasy. People do die, and here they did, and nasty things happened, lives were in put in danger. But it is never too violent, too bloody, and the main characters never get too hurt. There is always hope.

I quite enjoyed this tale about Berren, and the best part for me was also the part that makes me wanna read book 2. In the beginning Sy says that Berren looks like someone, then someone else says it too, and of course I am dying to find out what that is all about. Just as I wanted to know who Sy really was.

Conclusion:

A good solid fantasy story for all ages. There is danger, adventure, that first crush and secrets, and those are always the best. It's not that long either so I read it fast. I do look forward to book 2 to find out more. Recommended.

Rob Damon says

It was ok. No, in fact it was good. No, it was just ok. Hmmmm sort of good in parts....hmmmm mainly just ok though....although...the good bits were good. But it was still just ok.
